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Bat With Rabies Bites Carrollwood Resident

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Hillsborough County, FL- A woman walking around her neighborhood at night saw a bat on the sidewalk and decided to pick it up. The bat bit her finger during the process. She brought the bat to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County and it was tested for rabies. The bat tested positive and the woman is now receiving rabies prophylaxis.

The incident occurred in Carrollwood and is the second confirmed case of rabies for 2020 in Hillsborough County. No rabies alert has been issued since this is a single case found in wildlife.

This is the time of year bats are more active, and residents should call DOH if one is found inside their home.

It should be expected that there is always some level of the virus in Florida's wildlife population. This incident serves as a reminder to leave wildlife alone and ensure pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccinations. An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination.

Anyone who has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of any wild animal or an animal that is acting unusual should always report the exposure to the local health department. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

In 2019, Hillsborough County identified only one rabid animal, which was a raccoon in the Riverview area. One dog was exposed during that incident.

In 2018, Hillsborough County identified 10 rabid animals (six cats, two bats and two raccoons) that exposed 20 people and five domestic dogs to the disease.

Despite the decrease in cases, there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://hillsborough.floridahealth.gov/> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or Hillsborough County Pet Resource center at (813) 744-5660.

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